

Cherokee Nation

Partnerships for Active Transportation

The Cherokee Nation is determined to improve the health of Cherokees in northeast Oklahoma. As a recipient of a grant through the Centers for Disease Control's (CDC) Communities Putting Prevention to Work program, the Nation has implemented numerous programs to encourage Cherokees to live healthier lives, including physical activity encouragement, nutrition promotion, and commercial tobacco prevention. Through its Healthy Nation program, the Cherokee Nation offers smoking cessation courses, provides information about healthy eating at health fairs, encourages children to be physically active during and after school, and promotes health screenings.

Recently, the Cherokee Nation has expanded the scope of its Healthy Nation program to promote physical activity through improvements to transportation infrastructure. The Cherokee Nation recognizes that, by making it easier and safer to walk and bike within a community, it can encourage all Cherokees to incorporate more physical activity in their lives, improving the overall health of the Cherokee Nation. To do so, the Cherokee Nation has partnered



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with the city of Collinsville, OK, to make infrastructure investments that improve safety and support more active lifestyles which in turn make Cherokee communities healthier and better places in which to live.

In order to guide future investments toward making the community healthier, the Cherokee Nation helped the city of Collinsville develop a "Complete Streets" policy. The "Complete Streets" policy will require all roadway projects to consider the safety and mobility needs of all roadway users, including motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians. With this

policy in place, Collinsville's roadway network will develop into a system that better serves residents wishing to engage in active transportation.

The Cherokee Nation is also working with the city of Collinsville to encourage children to live more active lives. Many students live within a mile of their schools—a short walk—but many parents are concerned about traffic safety and so most children are either driven to school in cars or ride buses. A survey indicated that parents felt that the walking routes to school were unsafe due to a lack of adequate infrastructure and "eyes on the street."

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To address this problem, the Cherokee Nation is working with the city of Collinsville to secure \$186,000 in Federal Highway Administration funds to implement a Safe Routes to School program in the community. If granted, the funds, which are administered by the Oklahoma Department of Transportation, will support infrastructure improvements and programs that encourage children to walk and bicycle safely. The Cherokee Nation hopes to use the funds to implement infrastructure improvements that will demonstrate the benefits of building complete streets.

The “Complete Streets” policy and the Safe Routes to School program are two building blocks in the Cherokee Nation’s and the city of Collinsville’s partnership to promote walking and bicycling through infrastructure improvements. Building upon these efforts, the city of Collinsville expects to receive federal funds to construct a bike path linking Herald Elementary School and Collinsville Middle School. As part of its partnership with

the city, the Cherokee Nation plans to use some of its CDC funding to install amenities along the bike path, including lighting and benches. This bike path will provide a safe place for children to walk and bike to school and for all community members to enjoy being active.

The partnership that the Cherokee Nation and the city of Collinsville have formed exemplifies their commitment to making the community a healthier and more attractive place to be physically active. By leveraging resources, the Cherokee Nation and the city of Collinsville are working together to improve the health of everyone in their community.

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